

Message Text

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46

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FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

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INFO AMEMBASSY MASERU

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SUBJ: BOTSWANA INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATION

DEPARTMENT ALSO PASS USIA FOR USINFO

USIA FOR IBS COVERAGE DESK AND AFRICA DIVISION HEINTZEN

PASS IPS AFRICA BRANCH, MASERU ALSO FOR USIS

1. BOTSWANA'S EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE FROM GREAT

BRITAIN IN 1966 WAS CELEBRATED SEPTEMBER 28-30. FESTIVITIES IN BOTSWANAGYS CAPITAL GABORONE (HAB-UH-ROW-NEE) INCLUDED SPORTS COMPETITION, A GIRL GUIDES SPONSORED BALL, A COMBINED SUNDAY MORNING RELIGIOUS SERVICE AT THE NATIONAL STADIUM, TRADITIONAL DANCING, AND APRESIDENTIAL COCKTAIL HOSTED BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT OF BOTSWANA SIR SERETSE KHAMA AND HIS WIFE, LADY RUTH KHAMA. THE CELEBRATION WAS GIVEN AN ADDED FILLIP WHEN THE BOTSWANA TEAM BEAT THE VISITING SWAZIS 3-1 IN A SOCCER FOOTBALL MATCH ON MONDAY AFTERNOON, SEPTEMBER 30.

2. BOTSWANA WAS THE BRITISH PROTECTORATE OF BECHUANALAND PRIOR

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TO GAINING INDEPENDENCE ON SEPTEMBER 30, 1966. PROGRESS IN

BOTSWANA SINCE INDEPENDENCE HAS BEEN REMARKABLE. AT INDEPENDENCE, THERE WERE THOSE WHO DOUBTED THAT THE ARID, TEXAS-SIZED REPUBLIC WOULD EVER BECOME ECONOMICALLY VIABLE. HOWEVER, UNSUSPECTED MINERAL WEALTH ENABLED BOTSWANA TO BALANCE ITS BUDGET WITHOUT EXTERNAL SUBSIDY, AND TO UNDERTAKE AN AMBITIOUS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM. THE ORAPA DIAMOND MINE EXPLOITS THE SECOND LARGEST DIAMOND PIPE IN THE WORLD, AND WORK HAS BEGUN ON ANOTHER MINE NEARBY. THE COPPER-NICKEL COMPLEX AT SELEBI-PIKWE HAS MEANT THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW CITY, WITH A SMELTER ASSOCIATED WITH THE MINE. TREMENDOUS DEPOSITS OF COAL ARE BEING EXPLOITED FOR THE FIRST TIME, AND EXPLORATION FOR MORE COPPER IS GOING ON.

3. AS BOTSWANA ENTERS ITS NINTH YEAR OF INDEPENDENCE, THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT. CONTINUED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SEEMS ASSURED, AND THE COUNTRY HAS SHOWN GREAT POLITICAL MATURITY. THE THIRD NATION-WIDE ELECTION WILL BE HELD ON OCTOBER 26, 1974. CANDIDATES REPRESENTING FOUR PARTIES WILL STAND FOR SEATS IN THE 32-MEMBER PARLIAMENT.

4. IN A SPEECH TO THE NATION ON SEPTEMBER 29, PRESIDENT KHAMA HIGHLIGHTED THE MEANING OF INDEPENDENCE IN BOTSWANA BY SAYING, "DEMOCRACY, SELF-RELIANCE, DEVELOPMENT, AND UNITY HAVE NOT ONLY BEEN FULLY RESPECTED, BUT CONSOLIDATED DURING THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS... WE RECOGNIZE THAT DEMOCRACY IS A PART OF THE WAY OF LIFE OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY, AND WE INTEND TO DO ALL WE CAN TO ENSURE THAT IT REMAINS SO. FOR TO DO OTHERWISE WOULD BE TO DO A GRAVE DISSERVICE TO OUR PEOPLE AND OUR COUNTRY... WE CONTINUE TO ENJOY BUDGETARY SELF-SUFFICIENCY, AND THE SIZE OF OUR CONTRIBUTION TO OUR COUNTRY'S DEVELOPMENT BUDGET HAS GROWN SIGNIFICANTLY... INDEED THE PROGRESS WHICH WE HAVE SO FAR ACHIEVED IN DEVELOPING OUR COUNTRY IS QUITE REMARKABLE BY ANY STANDARDS." THOMSEN

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